

**SUMMARY OF THE
ACCREDITING AUTHORITY COMMITTEE MEETING
APRIL 6, 1999**

The Accrediting Authority Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Tuesday, April 6, 1999, at 1:30 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT). The meeting was led by its chair, Mr. John P. Anderson of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Division of Laboratories. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B.

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Anderson opened the meeting and requested that members refer to the agenda he had provided them prior to the meeting.

SPECIFIC ISSUES

6.3.3.1 (i) Continuing the discussion started at NELAC IVi regarding conflicts of interest within an accrediting authority's management or technical staff, the committee decided to not propose any changes to this section at this time. In light of the almost unanimous rejection of the proposal the committee set forth at NELAC IVi, and in light of discussions Mr. Anderson had with individuals representing the private laboratory community subsequent to NELAC IVi, the committee felt that the best course of action at this time is to let the existing standard stand and keep a watchful eye on the effectiveness of the prohibition against conflicts of interest within an accrediting authority during the first year or two NELAP implementation. If real or perceived conflicts of interest arise during the initial implementation phase, the committee committed to a vigorous review of the concerns at that time.

Mr. Anderson reported that he had discussed this approach to addressing the conflict-of-interest issue with the Board of Directors and had received their concurrence. The board also directed Mr. Anderson to write a letter to the Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB) informing them of the committee's final decision on this matter.

6.3.3.1 (d) The committee discussed timeframes for updating the national database. Based upon new input received by the committee, it was agreed to change the frequency to every two weeks. Mr. Anderson will draft the change and present suggested new language to the committee for approval at their next teleconference meeting.

General Because of concerns raised at NELAC IVi about consistency of assessments of accrediting authorities and laboratories, and adherence to the NELAC standard at all levels of the program, the committee discussed ways to assure these needs and concerns are addressed and provided for in the standard. The committee's discussion centered around establishing some means of assessing the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) at the program level so that information would be available to assure all participants that the program is consistent across U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) regions and among state NELAP-recognized accrediting authorities. Some ideas for achieving these goals included

use of third-party assessment teams, use of USEPA Quality Assurance (QA) staff, use of the Accrediting Authority Committee, and use of Accrediting Authority Review Board (AARB). The committee also discussed the proper timing for implementing assessment and the appropriate basis for the assessment (e.g. ISO Guide 61). Mr. Anderson suggested the formation of a subcommittee to refine the discussion and to craft language for the Standard. The committee concurred with this suggestion. Then Mr. Anderson appointed to the NELAP Oversight Subcommittee Mr. Louis Johnson (Chair), Mr. James Meyer, and Mr. Jefferson Flowers. He also was asked to send a copy of ISO Guide 61 to each subcommittee member.

Several comments on Chapter 6 were received from a meeting of USEPA lead assessors for accrediting authority application review and site assessment. The committee understands that additional comments arose from their experience assessing applications from accrediting authorities seeking NELAP recognition in this first round of program implementation, and that these additional comments will be forthcoming. The initial comments received are addressed below:

- 6.2.1 (a) The committee decided not to proceed with this change because the topic of reciprocity is covered adequately in the Standard. The amount of supplemental material a secondary accrediting authority may request was thoroughly debated a couple of years ago within the Accrediting Authority Committee. The committee members were adamant against introducing any changes to this procedure at this time.
- 6.2.1 (f) 3 The committee feels that they need more specific recommendations if they are to proceed with addressing turnaround time frames for the various steps of the application review process. Since the lead assessors have had the actual experience of trying to meet the turnaround requirements, the committee felt that the specific suggestions from the lead assessors should be available to the committee before it acts.
- 6.2.1 (g) The committee did not wish to change the time frame to 30 days without more specific information from the lead assessors.
- 6.3.1.(b) 4 “Assurance” will be changed to “insurance” as suggested.
- 6.3.3 (a) The committee did not wish to make the suggested change to 60 days without more specific information from the lead assessors.
- 6.3.3 (a) 4 The committee felt that inserting the phrase “endeavor to” would make the language too vague.
- 6.3.3 (d) The committee needed more clarification on this issue (providing assistance to the accrediting authority applicant) before proceeding the suggested change.
- 6.3.3.1 (e) “It” was changed to “its” as suggested.

6.3.3.1 The committee will take into consideration the request to include the requirement for SOPs cited in 6.3.1 (b) 3.

Mr. Anderson reported that Ms. Jeanne Mourrain may have more suggestions from the USEPA lead assessors in the near future.

NEW MEMBERS

The final item of discussion was the appointment of new members. Two members (Ms. Aurora Shields and Mr. Jack Farrell) have expiring terms and one member (Mr. Michael Ross) has been unable to make committee meetings. Using the roster of volunteers provided to the committee at the Interim Meeting, three potential new committee members were identified and will be contacted by Mr. Anderson to determine their willingness to serve on the Accrediting Authority Committee.

CONCLUSION

In order to address the anticipated new comments from the EPA lead assessors and to incorporate the results of the NELAP Oversight Subcommittee, the committee agreed to one more meeting to be held by teleconference on May 4 at 2:30 p.m. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:15 p.m.

**ACTION ITEMS
ACCREDITING AUTHORITY COMMITTEE MEETING
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Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1.	Mr. Anderson will send copies of ISO Guide 61 to NELAP Oversight Subcommittee members.	April 9, 1999
2.	Mr. Anderson will contact the three potential new members to invite them to join the AA Committee.	April 30, 1999
3.	The NELAP Oversight Subcommittee (Mr. Johnson, Mr. Meyer, and Mr. Flowers) will meet to refine discussion of NELAP oversight and to craft language pertinent to this topic for the Standard.	April 20, 1999
4.	Mr. Anderson will compile comments received from Ms. Mourrain via the USEPA lead assessors and distribute them to the committee prior to the next teleconference.	April 30, 1999

**PARTICIPANTS
ACCREDITING AUTHORITY COMMITTEE MEETING
APRIL 6, 1999**

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